

If a man has a little land, or a little money, or a little speculativeness, or a little unemployed timber, or a number of idle workmen, he straightway buildeth a villa. The villa mania is everywhere most obtrusive. You would smile, perhaps, at the vulgarity of the thing, if it were not for the certainty that the enterprising villa-builder must be building his fortune to death. Fortune must grow upwards, even more rapidly than they are growing downwards in these days, before all these splendid visions of wealthy tenants can be realised. Indeed, when we come to consider the number of purvey citizens that it will take to populate these snug suburbs, we are absolutely lost in wonder to determine where they can all come from.

We may talk about "signs of the times," but there is not one more surprising than this. As it was asked with reference to the astounding array of good husbands, fathers, citizens, &c., whom we meet, in monumental existence, in our churchyards, where all the bad ones were buried, so we are disposed to ask in these days, when we contemplate the number of houses in course of erection for the rich, where are the poor to be housed? One would think that there was no increase of population, lower down than the classes which rejoice in 500l. a-year, or that there was something of so cumulative a character in the times that every man must needs be on the look-out for the means of extending a larger income than he has heretofore had facilities of scattering abroad. But there is a fatal error in all this. An age of progress it may be, but not of financial progress. Retrenchment is the order of the day. We are fain to live over our shops. The trade of London is not now on the look-out for splendid suburban villas. There are enough, and more than enough, already in existence—unfurnished houses which we shall not soon see furnished—shells which will not very speedily be ready for occupation. But the poor want dwelling-places. Whilst we are exhausting our ingenuity to supply our villas with "every possible convenience," we are leaving our working-classes to the enjoyment of every possible inconvenience, in wretched stalls, to which men of substance would not condescend to assign their beasts of burden.—*Morning Herald.*

RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

FROM a misunderstanding as to money matters between Mr. H. H. Bird, a contractor on the Oxford and Wolverhampton line, and some of his subcontractors, the labourers employed by them have been threatening an outbreak at Moreton in March. Headed by two subcontractors, named Eain and Bell, they marched into the town, "determined to have money or be revenged," but the police interfered; and the subcontractors were subsequently apprehended on the alleged charge of stealing eight cart-horses belonging to Mr. Bird, and valued at 160l. The large bridge over the Tweed, below Galashiels, is nearly complete. It is about 300 feet long, and consists of five arches, two dry. The works between this and Melrose are nearly completed. The rightful proprietors of the Lancaster and Preston Railway can't be found, and the companies using it run their trains between Preston and Lancaster, it is said, without paying toll to any one. The report of Mr. R. Stephenson to the Chester and Holyhead, on Wednesday week, stated that the construction of the second tube of the Conway-bridge was far advanced, and there was no doubt it would be ready for removal by the middle of October. Since then active preparations were made for floating the tube into its proper place, prior to being finally fixed upon the piers and abutments on 10th inst. The six positions on which the tube was to be cradled during the process of raising were in readiness, each being 95 feet long, 25 broad, and 8 deep—capable separately of sustaining 400 tons, though only for 220. The castings at the pier ends were completed, and the hydraulic machines for lifting ready. The total weight of the tube is 1,300 tons; span over the river, 400 feet; inside width of tube, 14 feet. About three-fourths of the masonry of the Britannia-bridge have been completed; and it is calculated that the first tube will be ready

for lifting to its place in the course of next March or April. The cost of these structures has very much exceeded what was originally calculated on. The works at London-bridge for enlarging the station and widening the Greenwich viaduct have been resumed. The bridge to cross Bermoodsey-street is rapidly progressing. The Gravesend branch is also in a forward state. It is expected to be opened early in the spring. A Stockholm letter states that the works for the formation of a railway between Örebro and Hult, the first undertaking of the kind in Sweden, were commenced on the 4th ult.

DISTRICT SURVEYORS' CHARGES.

Sir,—May I beg of you to let me know whether the district surveyor can claim a fee of me by my taking out an old wash, lowering the stall board, and putting in a new sash, for there has been nothing done to any other part of the front besides what I have named. I have another to do, and the district surveyor wants half a guinea for the first, and, as a matter of course, the same for the other.

Now, Sir, it appears to me that if this claim is legal, the public dare not renew their doors or shutters without giving notice to a district surveyor, and paying him a fee. The cost of both these jobs will not amount to 10l., and must the hardworking tradesman pay 10 per cent. for the nominal supervision of such small alterations as these, when a duke, lord, or merchant, may build a house that costs 4,000l., and this selfsame surveyor would be satisfied with a very different per centage, and about forty times the trouble? Now, this is a vile impost which ought not to be tolerated, nor enforced upon tradesmen; and I think that the fairest way would be to tax each building in proportion to its cost; for this is like all the taxes that ruin trade and commerce, for it prevents improvements in many quarters, and where they are most needed. It is a singular fact that there are no taxes in this country but what fall unmercifully on the middle classes. What, I ask, can be more ruinous to the building classes than the tax on bricks?—for if a man builds a house with 20,000 bricks in it, he has to pay 6l. for the same, no matter the quality. Then comes the window tax, as if an impious Government said, Thou shalt not have light and health, without we are handsomely paid for it; and so we might go on to fill a volume with similar complaints.—I am, Sir, &c.,

W. TRENCH, Builder.

Hackney, Oct. 4, 1848.

* If nothing more be done than what is stated, the district surveyor ought not to require a fee.

METROPOLITAN COMMISSION OF SEWERS.

The Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company.—A special court was held on Thursday, last week, at the Court House, Greek-street, Soho-square, for the purpose of further considering what steps should be taken as to the fine of 500l. upon the above Company for cutting the bank of the Countess Creek sewer without permission from the commissioners. Lord Ebrington, M.P., took the chair.

The minutes of the former meeting having been read, the clerk laid before the court reports, shewing that the Manure Company had come to the following resolution:—

"Resolved, that in the opinion of the board, the imposition of such fines is illegal, but having been given to understand that these proceedings had arisen from a misapprehension of the nature of the works, it was resolved that an application be made to the commissioners that a deputation of the board, attended by the secretary and solicitor, may be permitted to wait upon them, with a view to explain the matter to the commissioners, and endeavour to bring it to an amicable conclusion."

A deputation from the company was in attendance, consisting of Dr. Guy (chairman), Mr. Bailey, solicitor, Dr. Hodgkin, and several of the directors. Mr. Bailey then addressed the court at considerable length, contending that there was no wish on the part of the company to do any thing in opposition to the powers of the commissioners, whose powers, they were perfectly aware, were almost unlimited. In fact, every act of the company proved the deference paid by it to the powers of the commissioners. There was a great distinction, however, to be drawn in the powers exercised by them over closed sewers, only used for the purposes of sewage, to the control over the waters

of a navigable canal. The works of the company, too, were as innocuous as he believed they were free from objection, and being under the impression that the commission was about expiring, they had determined upon making the communication with the canal; and their first act would have been to go to the new commissioners, no injury having been committed, and place the whole question before them. It might be, that the company had come to a wrong conclusion, but he must repeat that there was no desire to place themselves in opposition to the commissioners, knowing the great powers they possessed. He hoped the commissioners would take a favourable view of the question, and allow the works to be constructed, especially as the eyes of other companies for similar objects in other large towns were turned upon this, being the first incorporated by Act of Parliament. In fact, it had been expressed through Dr. Sutherland, that a company in Liverpool were anxiously waiting to know the result in this case, so that if successful the sewage of that town might be made useful for agricultural purposes. The market gardeners in the neighbourhood of London were anxious to make a trial of the sewage waters.

Lord Ebrington said, for himself, he felt some embarrassment as to how to treat the question, as Mr. Bailey, in his address, had neither admitted nor denied the powers of the commissioners. He had been waiting to hear him arrive at this point, believing as he (Lord E.) did that the commissioners had as much power over the bank of the canal as they possessed over closed sewers. He did not clearly understand what the application of Mr. Bailey was.

Mr. Bailey believed that a fine would never have been imposed if a proper explanation had been given. The company was of opinion that there was an interregnum in the commission; and that the work might be done under a right they possessed as the freeholders of the bank of the canal, secured to them by Act of Parliament. "We come (said Mr. Bailey) to ask your consent, if we cannot make the communication without it, and if you levy a small fine, of course it will be paid under protest."

Lord Ebrington—What will be the nature of that protest? Will it be on the ground of hardship or of legality?

Mr. Bailey—Oh, of course, against its legality. I wish that to be clearly understood.

Lord Ebrington believing that he had a clear view himself of the question, scarcely felt disposed to say another word until the legality of the commissioners was recognised.

Mr. Bailey here, having conferred with some of the deputation, wished to retire for a few minutes, to allow the directors to consider the question as to the powers of the commissioners, which was acceded to; and on their return, Dr. Guy, as chairman of the deputation, said they had come to the following resolution:—"The directors of the Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company, assembled at the office of the Commissioners of Sewers, after mature consideration, have resolved that, feeling the inexpediency of involving their shareholders in an expensive law-suit, and placing every confidence in the public spirit of the commissioners and wishing to give additional proof of their own desire to act in a spirit of conciliation, do hereby place themselves unreservedly in the hands of the commissioners in respect of the matter now in question, and request their permission to replace the pipe under the superintendence, and to the satisfaction, of the surveyor of the commissioners."

Mr. Leslie was of opinion that, if the company were to take the water of the Kensington Canal, to use it in a quantity so great that Mr. Norris would pay 1,800l. per year for it, it might interrupt the passage of barges two or three times every tide.

The Rev. W. Stowe looked upon the question as one of such great importance, that if they could guard against injury in the works of the commission, he was prepared to accede to the request of the company. If such could be done he was prepared at once to move that permission be granted to the company for twelve months.

Mr. Chadwick seconded the motion, as a trial work, as they had evidence before them that cheaper and better modes could be adopted. At the same time, he thought experiments carried out under the authority of the commissioners would be the most satisfactory to the public and to the shareholders themselves. He was sorry for the delay that had arisen, but that was not the fault of the members of this commission.

A resolution to the following effect was then submitted:—"That under clause 8 of the Westminster Sewers Act, 10 & 11 Vict., this court feels itself disposed to give the desired consent for a period not exceeding fifteen months, the company constructing as a trial work, and subject to the approbation of the consulting engineer, surveyors, and officers of this court."

The motion was put and carried with but one dissentient.

It was also agreed that the fines of 500l. on the company, and 50l. on the contractor, should be remitted.